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FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7648
INFO RHEHNSC/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8761
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: WESTERN HEMISPHERE: VENEZUELA;SAO PAULO.

11. "The Language That Chavez Understands"

Center-right national circulation daily O Estado de S. Paulo editorialized (11/6): "A regime that permits a caudillo to remain perennially in power, deprives minorities and the opposition their fundamental liberties and allows a nation to be ruled without the necessary legal guaranties is a true dictatorship. A nation armed to the teeth without any plausible reason for that represents a threat to its neighbors, regardless of the fact that the caudillo speaks about Latin American fraternity and solidarity.... Colonel Hugo Chavez, who this week became Venezuela's (perpetual) constitutional dictator, is preparing a military adventure.... It is not only Brazil that will be affected by Chavez's arms acquisitions. It is the entire region's strategic balance that will be altered. To suppose that Venezuelan forces would invade Brazil is as absurd as to imagine that the U.S. will invade Venezuela.... But Chavez has already said that he may intervene militarily in Bolivia to support Evo Morales' regime, and it is perfectly possible that he will occupy the Essequibo region in Guyana. One should not forget that there is a treaty allowing Venezuela to maintain military bases in Bolivian territory.... Chavez considers the Essequibo region part of Venezuelan territory illegally under Guyana's sovereignty. A military adventure near the Brazilian border would force the GOB to adopt a tough position - which could not be restricted to rhetorical condemnations in multilateral diplomatic fora.... Brazil will not stop the caudillo with soft words and appeals to reason. Chavez only understands one language. The GOB will do right, as announced a few days ago, in speeding up a program to reequip its Armed Forces providing them with the necessary means for national defense."

12. "Armed Discussions"

An editorial in liberal, leading national circulation daily Folha de S. Paulo (11/6) remarked: "The origin of Chavez's coming together with Russia's military industry is a reaction to the U.S. blockade denying acquisition of American arms by Venezuela. The U.S. veto, resulting from Chavez's childish attacks against the Bush administration, was another deplorable attitude adopted by the U.S. diplomacy in regards to Latin America. As happened in its shameful support of the failed coup attempt against the Venezuelan president in 2002, Washington now helped give Chavez an ideal pretext for his adventures.... Disputes with Colombia and, something more plausible - an intervention in Guyana, of which Venezuela claims approximately two thirds of its territory, would not be only a fable, but options available to Hugo Chavez. Venezuela's increasing arms acquisitions is already causing effects in Brazil. Concerns with its northern neighbor helped increase significantly the Armed Forces budget for next year."

13. "Chvez Changes Laws To Perpetuate Himself In power"

Business-oriented Valor Economico's editorial maintained (11/6):
"Venezuela is quickly abandoning the last traces of democracy and marching towards adapting its institutions to President Hugo Chvez's authoritarianism and populism.... With the new Constitution, Chvez will be able to reelect himself indefinitely and each presidential term will be expanded from six to seven years.... Force demonstrations and intimidations coming from the Chvez administration include an arms race fed by petrodollars. The foreign threat justification represented by the U.S. is a mix of paranoia and political calculation. Armed to the teeth, the Chvez administration now enjoys an enormous domestic dissuasive power and a major source of diplomatic concern for his neighbors, beginning with Brazil.... Chvez took a vital step to install his absolute power in Venezuela. The supposed Brazilian strategy of including him in Mercosul to moderate his radicalism did not produce any visible results. To insist on that, when he does not respect democratic formalities, is a mistake."
White